GOOD MORNING!

This year the Asian Development Bank and Sri Lanka will celebrate the 50th year of our partnership. During the last 50 years, Sri Lanka has received ADB loan financing up to 6.91 billion dollars and a further 485.7 million dollars in grant and technical assistance. Environment is one of the foremost concerns of the ADB and is fully conscious of the role it can play to protect and preserve the environment. Sri Lanka has been endowed with plentiful environmental resources but is facing the challenge of preserving and developing the environment.

In this context, The Asian Development Bank is very happy to partner with Sri Lanka Judges Institute to hold this workshop for the judges of the High Court of Sri Lanka on "law of writs and the environment". ADB recognizes the crucial role of the justice sector, particularly in protection and enforcement, and this initiative will undoubtedly further strengthen the judiciary in discharging the duties of that role more effectively.

As you may be aware, this is a follow on to the very successful Asian Judges Roundtable on the Environment that was hosted by the Chief Justice’s office and the ADB in 2014 in Colombo, and is part of ADB’s regional strategy of enhancing judicial capacity through various interventions including facilitating knowledge and experience sharing sessions such as this one.

Moreover, access to justice is included in one of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a specific target to "promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all." The judiciaries of South Asia can play its role in promoting the SDGs by ensuring that the people of the region see the courts as their partner and champion in promoting and upholding the SDGs.

ADB as an institution has committed to work with the global community and other development partners in making the SDGs a reality. We see the judiciaries of Asia as our partners in this endeavor, through the promotion of the rule of law and access to justice. The commitment and dedication to environmental justice which you have shown encourages us at ADB to constantly strive to support these initiatives and continue on building partnerships and friendships for the environment in the region.

I would like to welcome to Sri Lanka and thank the distinguish speakers and participants from overseas who would deliberate with you over the next two days and share their perspectives. I am sure you will take back with you many ideas from the work of Sri Lanka’s long established judiciary.

ADB looks forward to continue to engage with the justice sector. I wish you all the best in your deliberations during the next two days in tackling environmental issues that is posing global challenges to all mankind.

Thank you